

Briefing Statement

Bureau:	NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Issue:	Future Disposition of Elkmont Structures
Park Site:	Great Smoky Mountains National Park
Date:	March 17, 2004

BACKGROUND:

A total of 74 cottages, outbuildings and a hotel are located in the Elkmont section of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which were purchased in the 1920's and 30's when lands were acquired to create the Park. They were occupied until December 1992 through a series of leases. The current Park's General Management Plan (GMP), approved in 1982, documents a decision that upon expiration of the leases (in 1992) the buildings should be removed and the land restored to a natural state.

In early 1994, the Elkmont District was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Of the 74 structures, 26 were identified as non-contributing to the Historic District. In 1994, the NPS notified the Tennessee State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) of the Service's intent to remove all the structures in the enclave. The NPS also outlined plans to perform the mitigation actions required by the National Historic Preservation Act for removal of historic structures. The SHPO rejected the NPS plan and the National Advisory Council for Historic Preservation (ACHP) was called upon to help resolve the impasse.

In 1999 the NPS, the ACHP, the SHPO, agreed to work together to implement a public process to generate a management plan for the Elkmont District that would meet three requirements: 1) comply with the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act, 2) comply with requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, and 3) become an amendment to the Park's General Management Plan.

CURRENT STATUS:

Public opinion expressed at a series of meetings has become polarized at two ends of the management spectrum. One group favors preservation of the minimum number of structures and restricting their use to a combination of public day-use and NPS functions. The other group favors preservation of the maximum number of buildings and using them under concessions as a restaurant and overnight lodging. At March 2004 meetings seven draft alternatives were presented for input. Preliminary cost estimates of the actions ranged from under \$1 million to over \$28 million.

Managers will next model the expected natural and cultural impacts and will refine the estimated cost of each alternative and present that information in a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The EIS will be the basis of new preservation and management strategy for the Elkmont District as well as an Amendment to the Park's GMP. A draft EIS is expected in fall 2004 and a record of decision should be issued by spring 2005.

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